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A LEGEND OF GLENDALOUGH

AND OTHER BALLADS

by

DORA SIGERSON SHORTER



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A LEGEND OF
GLEN DALOUGH
AND OTHER BALLADS

DORA SIGERSON SHORTER

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A LEGEND OF
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GLEN DALOUGH
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DORA SIGERSON SHORTER

MAUNSEL AND ROBERTS LTD.
DUBLIN AND LONDON. 1921

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THE DEER-STONE

A LEGEND OF GLENDALOUGH

It was the bride of Colman Dhu
In Glendalough sat down,
She hushed the babe upon her breast
Beside the lake so brown.

The mountains steep about her rose
All glad in green and gold,
The hearts of all the waters deep
Again their glory hold.

Now had the bride of Colman Dhu
Looked long towards the west,
She there had seen the glowing sun
Slip slow towards his rest.

But had she looked towards the east,
A maid there was to see,
Who bore two daggers in her eyes—
Black hate and jealousy.

She did not look towards the east,
Nor looked she to the south,
But closed her two white lids in sleep,
A smile on her red mouth.

Oh, had she seen the evil maid
Who death so stealthy bore,
She had not closed her lashes long
She now would raise no more.

Slow crept the witch unto her side,
And saw with furious eye
The smiling two in slumber deep,
Who did so helpless lie.

“ And for the tears, O Colman proud,
That I have shed for you,
I'll drive a sorrow in your breast
To break your heart in two.

“ And for the words that you have said,
To crush me with disdain,
I'll hush the laughter on your lips
That shall not smile again.”

Within her hand a deadly draught
She raised a moment up,
“ And shall it be your little son
Who first must taste the cup ?

“ Ah, no ! For should your bride awake,
Her grief would mend your moan,
For you in pity at her tears
Would half forget your own.

“ But if death lies upon her heart,
The two are surely slain ;
The little babe must thirst and die,
And you are mine again.”

She looked upon each lovely face
That held a soul asleep;
“And one shall drink of deadly wine,
A draught both long and deep.”

She looked upon the baby lips
That curling 'neath her eyes,
Sought some sweet fountain in his dreams,
And fed with gentle sighs;

Then with a frown and muttered groan
Quick to the other crept,
And raised the cup in her false hand,
To slay them while they slept.

Ah, gentle Nature, at the deed
You quenched within the west
Your golden lamp, so none might see
The murder stand confessed.

Then thrice upon the frightened air,
The dying lips drew breath,
Twice in they drew the wine of life,
And once the draught of death.

Now Colman, with his spear in hand,
Late coming from the chase,
Heard the low weeping of a child
Within a lonesome place.

“Oh, hard your mother's heart,” he said,
“Your cries she will not hear!”
Quick from his steed he sprang, and saw
His wife and child so dear.

Soft came the weeping of the babe
Whose fount had grown so cold.
He flung himself upon the earth,
And did his wife enfold.

All silent was she to his cries,
Her cheek was cold as death,
And to his hot impassioned kiss
Came no responsive breath.

And when he saw that she was dead
He rose up to his feet,
And wrapped her in his hunting coat
To make her winding sheet.

“Mo Chree,” he said, “your bed to-night
Will be both dark and cold,
On what new island will you wake,
Or what strange face behold ?

“Asthór,” he said, “lest you should fear
To wander forth alone,
I’ll follow through the gates of death
To claim you for my own.”

Into his fond and loving heart
He drove his hunting knife,
And by his bride’s chill side he lay,
And soon gave up his life.

.

It was the good St. Kevin went,
All bowed and lost in prayer,
And as he paced his lonely path
The young witch met him there.

And in her gown the poison cup
She did most quickly hide,
But spoke the good saint unto her,
And would not be denied.

“What evil thing is this?” he said,
“That you must put away?
It is no gracious act indeed
That fears the light of day.”

“It is but bread,” the witch replied,
“From my small store I take,
To feed a poor deserted babe,
I go for pity sake.”

“Now, be it bread,” the priest replied,
“I pray it multiply;
But if it is an evil thing,
Full heavy may it lie.”

And then the priest, all deep in prayer,
Went forth his lonely way,
While stood the witch upon the path
In wild and deep dismay.

For in her robe the poison cup
Did all so heavy grow,
She scarce could stand upon her feet,
And could but slowly go.

Now when she reached the rugged rock
That held her hidden home,
The waters threw their magic up
And blinded her with foam.

She gave a sharp and sudden cry
And fell within the lake,
And so may perish all who sin,
And evil vengeance take.

But good St. Kevin, deep in prayer,
His holy way did go.
Soon came to him the sound of grief,
Soft cries of bitter woe.

There in a dark and lonesome place
A little babe he found,
And, close beside, a lovely pair
All cold upon the ground.

“Movrone, Movrone,” the good saint cried,
“What evil deed is here?”
And for their beauty and their youth
He shed a bitter tear.

He dug for them a lonely grave,
A grave both wide and deep;
“And slumber well,” he softly said,
“Till God shall end your sleep.”

He knelt him down upon his knee
Their lonely bed beside,
And then he saw the little babe
That weak in hunger cried.

He raised it up in his two hands,
And held it close and warm;
“O Christ,” he said, “your mercy give
To keep this child from harm.

" Oh, pitiful indeed is this
Poor little one alone,
Whose dead lie peaceful in their sleep
While he doth make his moan.

" O Mary, who in Bethlehem
Held once upon thy breast
A tender babe, look down on this
Who is so sore oppressed.

" I have no food for this poor child,
Who must with hunger die.
Thy mercy give," the good priest prayed
With many a piteous sigh.

He looked across the waters deep,
And to the hills so brown,
And lo! a shy wood creature there
All timidly came down.

And thrice it sprang towards the west,
And thrice towards the east,
It was as though some hand unseen
Drove forth the gentle beast.

But when the little child it heard,
That still with hunger cried,
It sprang before the guiding hand,
And stood the babe beside.

And in a hollowed stone it shed
Its milk so warm and white,
And then, all timid, stood apart
To watch the babe's delight.

And at each eve and every morn
The gentle doe was there,
To find the little babe, and see
The saint, all deep in prayer.

.

In Glendalough the stone lies still
All plainly to be seen,
And many folk will point the place
Where once the milk had been.

THE WOMAN WHO WENT TO HELL

AN IRISH LEGEND

Young Dermod stood by his mother's side,
And he spake right stern and cold ;
“ Now, why do you weep and wail,” he said,
“ And joy from my bride withhold ?

“ And why do you keen and cry,” said he,
“ So loud on my marriage day ?
The wedding guests they now eager wait,
All clad in their rich array.

“ The priest is ready with book and stole,
And you do this grievous thing :
You keep me back from the altar rail—
My bride from her wedding ring.”

His mother she rose, and she dried her tears,
She took him by his right hand—
“ The cause,” she said, “ of my grief and pain
Too soon must you understand.

“ Oh, one-and-twenty long years ago
I walked in your father's farm,
I broke a bough from a ripe peach-tree,
And carried it on my arm.

“ My heart was light as a thistle-seed—
I had but been wed a year—
I dreamt of joy that would soon be mine—
A babe in my arms so dear.

“ There came to me there a stranger man,
And these are the words he spake :
‘ The fruit you carry I fain would buy,
I pray you my gold to take.’

“ The fruit I carried he then did buy—
You lying beneath my heart—
I tendered to him the ripe peach-bough,
He tore the gold branch apart.

“ He whispered then in my frightened ear
The name of the Evil One,
‘ And this have I bought to-day,’ he said—
‘ The soul of your unborn son.

“ ‘ The fruit you carry, which I did buy,
Will ripen before I claim ;
And when the bells for his wedding ring
Again you shall hear my name.’ ”

Now Dermod rose from his mother’s side,
And all loud and long laughed he.
He bore her down to the wedding-guests,
All sorrowful still was she.

“ Now, cry no more, sweet mother,” he said.
“ For you are a doleful sight.
And who is there in the banquet-hall
Can claim my soul to-night ? ”

Then one rose up from the wedding throng,
But his face no man could see,
And he said, "Now bid your dear farewell,
For your soul belongs to me."

Young Dermod stood like a stricken man,
His mother she swooned away;
But his love ran quick to the stranger's side,
And to him she this did say:

"If you will let his young soul go free,
I will serve you true and well,
For seven long years to be your slave
In the bitterest place of hell."

"Seven long years, if you be my slave,
I will let his soul go free."
The stranger drew her then by the hand,
And into the night went he.

Seven long years did she serve him true
By the blazing gates of hell,
And on every soul that entered in
The tears of her sorrow fell.

Seven long years did she keep the place,
To open the doors accurst,
And every soul that her tear-drops knew—
It would neither burn nor thirst.

And once she let in her father dear,
And once passed her brother through,
Once came a friend she had loved full well,
O, bitter it was to do!

On the last day of the seven long years
She stood by her master's knee—
“A boon, a boon for the work well done
I pray that you grant to me.

“A boon, a boon, that I carry forth
What treasure my strength can bring.”
“*That* you may do,” said the Evil One,
“And all for a little thing.

“All you can carry you may take forth
By serving me seven years more.”
Bitter she wept for the world and love,
But took her sad place by the door.

Seven long years did she serve him well
Until the last day was done,
And all the souls that she had let in,
They clung to her one by one.

And all the souls that she had let through
They clung to her dress and hair,
Until the burden that she brought forth
Was heavy as she could bear.

The first who stopped her upon her way
Was an angel with sword aflame;
“The Lord has sent for your load,” he said,
“St. Michael it is my name.”

The woman drew back his gown af white,
And the cloven hoof did see;
“Oh, God, be with me to-night,” she cried,
“For bitter my sorrows be.

“ I will not give it to you,” she wept,
Quick grasping her burden tight ;
And all the souls that surrounded her
Clung closer in dire affright.

The next who stopped her upon her way
Was a maid all fair to see,
And “ Sister, your load is great,” she said
“ So give it, I pray, to me.

“ The Virgin, I am, God sent me forth
That you to your love might go,”
The woman she saw the phantom's eyes
And paled at their fierce red glow :

“ I will not give it to you,” said she,
And wept full many a tear.
And all the souls that her burden made
Cried out in desperate fear.

The third who met her upon her way
Was a Man with face so fair :
She knelt her down at His wounded feet,
And she laid her burden there.

“ Oh I will give it to You,” she said,
And fell in a swoon so deep,
The flying souls and their cries of joy
Did not wake her from her sleep.

Seven long days did her slumber last,
And, oh, but her dream was sweet,
She thought she wandered in God's far land,
The bliss of her hopes complete !

And when she woke on the seventh day
To her love's home did she go.
And there she met neither man nor maid
Who ever her face did know.

And lo! she saw set a wedding feast,
And tall by her own love's side
There leaned a maiden, all young and fair,
Who never should be his bride.

“A drink, a drink, my little page boy,
A drink I do pray you bring.”
She took the goblet up in her hand,
And dropped in her golden ring.

“He who would marry, my little page,
I pray he may drink with me,
'To the old true love he has forgot,'
And this must his toasting be.”

When her false lover had got the cup
He drained it both deep and dry,
“To my dead love that I mourned so long,
I would that she now were nigh.”

He took from the cup the golden ring,
And he turned it in his hand;
He said, “Whoever has sent this charm
I cannot her power withstand.”

“Oh she is weary, and sad, and old,”
The little page boy replied;
But Dermot strode through the startled guests,
And stood by his own love's side.

He took her up in his two strong arms,
And "Have you come home?" he said,
"Twice seven long years I mourned you well
As silent among the dead."

He kissed her twice on her faded cheek,
And thrice on her snow-white hair.
"And this is my own true wife," he said
To the guests who gathered there.

"Oh she is withered and old," they cried,
"And her hair is pale as snow.
'Twere better you took the fair young girl,
And let the sad old love go."

"I will not marry the fair young girl,
No woman I wed but this,
The sweet white rose of her cheek," said he,
"Shall redden beneath my kiss.

"There is no beauty in all the land
That can with her face compare."
He led her up to the table head,
And sat her beside him there.

KATHLEEN'S CHARITY

“ God bless the work,” said young Kathleen,
She bent her golden head,
And in her cheek that was so pale
The blood crept rosy red.

Quick flew the humming spinning-wheel,
The thread was all but done,
And like the pale shafts of a star
The gleaming strands she spun.

“ And when the cloth is mine ”—she smiled,
The wheel sang soft and low—
“ I'll make a robe all straight and white,
That I a bride may go,”

“ The world is good,” she said, and laughed,
A-turning of her wheel,
Then by her stood a beggar maid,
Who prayed with faint appeal.

“ I have not gold,” sighed sweet Kathleen,
“ Nor silver you to give,
Yet if you go so pale and wan
I fear you scarce can live.

“ So take my thread, 'twill weave a gown
To keep you from the cold.”
The beggar kissed the giving hand,
And blessed a hundred-fold.

"My work is done," said poor Kathleen,
And put her wheel aside,
"Yet like God's Mother sweet she looked,
So fair and holy-eyed.

"And though no silken gown I wear
To deck me as a bride,
I yet can pray with grateful heart,
For we have much beside.

"To-morrow in the bare brown earth
We set our golden seed,
The yellow corn we scatter wide,
To make us rich indeed."

Now as she spake beside her stood
An aged man and frail,
And there all piteous to her ear
He told a woeful tale.

"I have not silver now nor gold,
Nor cloth to robe you in,
Yet should I giftless drive you forth
It were a grievous sin."

She gave the sack of golden corn
That was her father's store,
And in her breast her frightened heart
Was beating wild and sore.

"Oh, woe is me," she turned and cried,
"My father stern and cold
Oh, cruel will he be to her
Who robbed him of his gold!"

She took the chaff in her two hands
With many a moan and sigh,
And spread it on the bare brown earth
Before her sire went by.

“Ochone,” she said, “to so deceive
My father, blind and grey,
For little store shall bear the seed
That I have sown to-day.”

She bent to weep, but by her side
A child stood all alone,
“And ’tis in vain,” poor Kathleen cried,
“That here you make your moan.

“For I have left no gifts to give.
No cloth, no food, no gold ;
So I must drive you forth,” she said,
“To perish in the cold.”

She took the child unto her heart,
And then her tears let fall,
“Oh, woe it is to bid you go,
And you so weak and small.”

She set him down upon his way,
And kissed his cheek and chin,
And then she saw a golden thread
He held his hands within.

“I met a lady on the road,”
The little one replied,
“She said this thread would weave a gown
To robe a happy bride.

“ She bade me when I met with one
Whose mercy was so great,
She'd give her very tears away
In pity for my state—

“ She said, ‘ Give her this silken thread.
A wedding gown to weave.’ ”
Fair Kathleen took the golden ball,
But yet her heart did grieve.

“ For I have robbed my father dear,
My father, old and weak,
And oh, what shall I answer him
When he his grain shall seek ?

“ And oh, what shall I say to him
That he could me believe,
Who sowed the chaff upon the ground,
His dim eyes to deceive ? ”

And woeful looked she to the north,
And woeful to the south,
And there she saw a little child
With laughter on his mouth.

She looked into her father's field,
Where once the chaff had been,
And lo ! the sprouting grain was there,
With ears all high and green.

“ The world is good,” said young Kathleen,
And knelt her down to pray,
“ I know that some of God's sweet saints
Did visit me to-day.”

THE WHITE WITCH

Heaven help your home to-night,
MacCormac, for I know
A white witch woman is your bride:
You married for your woe.

You thought her but a simple maid
That roamed the mountain-side;
She put the witch's glance on you,
And so became your bride.

But I have watched her close and long
And know her all too well;
I never churned before her glance
But evil luck befell.

Last week the cow beneath my hand
Gave out no milk at all;
I turned, and saw the pale-haired girl
Lean laughing by the wall.

"A little sup," she cried, "for me;
The day is hot and dry."
"Begone!" I said, "you witch's child,"
She laughed a loud good-bye.

And when the butter in the churn
Will never rise, I see
Beside the door the white witch girl
Has got her eyes on me.

At dawn to-day I met her out
Upon the mountain-side,
And all her slender finger-tips
Were each a crimson dyed.

Now I had gone to seek a lamb
The darkness sent astray :
Sore for a lamb the dawning winds
And sharp-beaked birds of prey.

But when I saw the white witch maid
With blood upon her gown,
I said, "I'm poorer by a lamb ;
The witch has dragged it down."

And "Why is this, your hands so red
All in the early day?"
I seized her by the shoulder fair,
She pulled herself away.

"It is the raddle on my hands,
The raddle all so red,
For I have marked MacCormac's sheep
And little lambs," she said.

"And what is this upon your mouth
And on your cheek so white?"
"Oh, it is but the berries' stain";
She trembled in her fright.

"I swear it is no berries' stain,
Nor raddle all so red";
I laid my hands about her throat,
She shook me off, and fled.

I had not gone to follow her
A step upon the way,
When came I to my own lost lamb,
That dead and bloody lay.

“Come back,” I cried, “you witch’s child,
Come back and answer me”;
But no maid on the mountain-side
Could ever my eyes see.

I looked into the glowing east,
I looked into the south,
But did not see the slim young witch,
With crimson on her mouth.

Now, though I looked both well and long,
And saw no woman there,
Out from the bushes by my side
There crept a snow-white hare.

With knife in hand I followed it
By ditch, by bog, by hill;
I said, “Your luck be in your feet,
For I shall do you ill.”

I said, “Come, be you fox or hare,
Or be you mountain maid,
I’ll cut the witch’s heart from you,
For mischief you have made.”

She laid her spells upon my path,
The brambles held and tore,
The pebbles slipped beneath my feet,
The briars wounded sore.

And then she vanished from my eyes
Beside MacCormac's farm,
I ran to catch her in the house
And keep the man from harm.

She stood with him beside the fire,
And when she saw my knife,
She flung herself upon his breast
And prayed he'd save her life.

"The woman is a witch," I cried,
"So cast her off from you";
"She'll be my wife to-day," he said,
"Be careful what you do!"

"The woman is a witch," I said;
He laughed both loud and long:
She laid her arms about his neck,
Her laugh was like a song.

"The woman is a witch," he mocked,
And laughed both long and loud;
She bent her head upon his breast,
Her hair was like a cloud.

I said, "See blood upon her mouth
And on each finger-tip!"
He said, "I see a pretty maid,
A rose upon her lip."

He took her slender hand in his
To kiss the stain away—
Oh, well she cast her spell on him,
What could I do but pray?

"May heaven guard your house to-night!"
I whisper as I go,
"For you have won a witch for bride,
And married for your woe."

THE FETCH

“What makes you so late at the trysting?
What caused you so long to be?
For a weary time I have waited
From the hour you promised me.”

“I would I were here by your side, love,
Full many an hour ago,
For a thing I passed on the roadway
All mournful and so slow.”

“And what have you passed on the roadside
That kept you so long and late?”

“It is weary the time behind me
Since I left my father’s gate.

“As I hastened on in the gloaming
By the road to you to-night,
There I saw the corpse of a young maid
All clad in a shroud of white.”

“And was she some comrade cherished,
Or was she a sister dead,
That you left thus your own beloved
Till the trysting-hour had fled?”

“Oh, I would that I could discover,
But never did see her face,
And I knew I must turn and follow
Till I came to her resting place.”

“ And did it go up by the town path,
Did it go down by the lake ?
I know there are but the two churchyards
Where a corpse its rest may take.”

“ They did not go up by the town path,
Nor stopped by the lake their feet,
They buried the corpse all silently
Where the four cross-roads do meet.”

“ And was it so strange a sight, then,
That you should go like a child,
Thus to leave me wait all forgotten—
By a passing sight beguiled ?”

“ ’Twas my name that I heard them whisper,
Each mourner that passed by me ;
And I had to follow their footsteps,
Though their faces I could not see.”

“ And right well I should like to know, now,
Who might be this fair young maid,
So come with me, my own true love,
If you be not afraid.”

He did not go down by the lakeside,
He did not go by the town,
But carried her to the four cross-roads,
And he there did set her down.

“ Now, I see no track of a foot here,
I see no mark of a spade,
And I know right well in this white road
That never a grave was made.”

And he took her hand in his right hand
And led her to town away,
And there he questioned the good old priest,
Did he bury a maid that day?

And he took her hand in his right hand,
Down to the church by the lake,
And there he questioned the pale young priest
If a maiden her life did take?

But neither had heard of a new grave
In all the parish around,
And no one could tell of a young maid
Thus put in unholy ground.

So he loosed her hand from his hand,
And turned on his heel away,
And, "I know now you are false," he said,
"From the lie you told to-day."

And she said, "Alas! what evil thing
Did to-night my senses take?"
She knelt her down by the water-side
And wept as her heart would break.

And she said, "Oh, what fairy sight then
Was it thus my grief to see?
I will sleep well 'neath the still water,
Since my love has turned from me."

And her love he went to the north land,
And far to the south went he,
And her distant voice he still could hear
Call weeping so bitterly.

And he could not rest in the daytime,
He could not sleep in the night,
So he hastened back to the old road,
With the trysting place in sight.

What first he heard was his own love's name,
And keening both loud and long,
What first he saw was his love's dear face,
At the head of a mourning throng.

And all white she was as the dead are,
And never a move made she,
But passed him by in her lone black pall,
Still sleeping so peacefully.

And all cold she was as the dead are,
And never a word she spake,
When they said, "Unholy is her grave
For she her life did take."

And silent she was as the dead are,
And never a cry she made,
When there came, more sad than the keening,
The ring of a digging spade.

No rest she had in the old town church,
No grave by the lake so sweet,
They buried her in unholy ground,
Where the four cross roads do meet.

THE BALLAD OF THE LITTLE BLACK HOUND

Who knocks at the Geraldine's door to-night
In the black storm and the rain?
With the thunder crash and the shrieking wind
Comes the moan of a creature's pain.

And once they knocked, yet never a stir
To show that the Geraldine knew;
And twice they knocked, yet never a bolt
The listening Geraldine drew.

And thrice they knocked ere he moved his chair,
And said, "Whoever it be,
I dare not open the door to-night
For a fear that has come to me."

Three times he rises from out his chair,
And three times he sits him down.
"Now what makes faint this heart of mine?"
He says with a growing frown.

"Now what has made me a coward to-night,
Who never knew fear before?
But I swear the hand of a little child
Keeps pulling me from the door."

The Geraldine rose from his chair at last
And opened the door full wide ;
“ Whoever is out in the storm,” said he,
“ May in God’s name come inside !”

He who was out in the storm and rain
Drew back at the Geraldine’s call.
“ Now who comes not in the Holy Name
Will never come in at all.”

He looked to the right, he looked to the left,
And never a one saw he ;
But right in his path lay a coal black hound,
A-moaning right piteously.

“ Come in,” he cried, “ you little black hound,
Come in, I will ease your pain ;
My roof shall keep you to-night at least
From the lash of wind and rain.”

The Geraldine took up the little black hound,
And put him down by the fire.
“ So sleep you there, poor wandering one,
As long as your heart desire.”

The Geraldine tossed on his bed that night,
And never asleep went he
For the crowing of his little red cock,
That did crow most woefully,

For the howling of his own wolf-hound,
That cried at the gate all night.
He rose and went to the banquet hall
At the first of morning light.

He looked to the right, he looked to the left,
At the rug which the dog lay on ;
But the reindeer skin was burnt in two,
And the little black hound was gone.

And, traced in the ashes, these words he read :
“ For the soul of your firstborn son,
I will make you rich as you once were rich
Ere the glass of your luck was run.”

The Geraldine went to the west window,
And then he went to the east,
And saw his desolate pasture fields,
And the stables without a beast.

“ So be it, as I love no woman,
No son shall ever be mine ;
I would that my stables were full of steeds,
And my cellars were full of wine.

“ I swear it, as I love no woman,
And never a son have I,
I would that my sheep and their little lambs
Should flourish and multiply.

“ So yours be the soul of my firstborn son.”
Here the Geraldine slyly smiled,
But from the dark of the lonely room
Came the cry of a little child.

The Geraldine went to the west window,
He opened, and out did lean,
And lo ! the pastures were full of kine,
All chewing the grass so green.

And quickly he went to the east window,
And his face was pale to see,
For lo! he saw to the empty stalls
Brave steeds go three by three.

The Geraldine went to the great hall door,
In wonder at what had been,
And up there came the prettiest maid
That ever his eyes had seen.

And long he looked at the pretty young maid,
And swore there was none so fair;
And his heart went out of him like a hound,
And hers like a timid hare.

Each day he followed her up and down,
And each night he could not rest,
Until at last the pretty young maid
Her love for him all confessed.

They wooed and they wed, and the days went by
As quick as such good days will,
And at last came the cry of his firstborn son
The cup of his joy to fill.

And the summer passed, and the winter came;
Right fair was the child to see,
And he laughed at the shriek of a bitter storm
As he sat on his father's knee.

Who rings so loud at the Geraldine's gate?
Who knocks so loud at the door?
"Now rise you up, my pretty young wife,
For twice they have knocked before."

Quickly she opened the great hall door,
And "Welcome you in," she cried,
But there only entered a little black hound,
And he would not be denied.

When the Geraldine saw the little black dog,
He rose with a fearful cry:
"I sold my child to the Devil's hound
In forgotten days gone by."

He drew his sword on the little black hound,
But it would not pierce its skin,
He tried to pray, but his lips were dumb
Because of his grievous sin.

Then the fair young wife took the black hound's
throat
Both her small white hands between.
And he thought he saw one of God's angels
Where his sweet young wife had been,

Then he thought he saw from God's spirit
The hound go sore oppressed,
But he woke to find his own dead wife
With her dead child on her breast.

Quickly he went to the west window,
Quickly he went to the east;
No help in the desolate pasture fields,
Or the stables that held no beast.

He flung himself at his white wife's side,
And the dead lips moved and smiled,
Then came somewhere from the lonely room
The laugh of a little child.

THE PRIEST'S BROTHER

Thrice in the night the priest arose
From broken sleep to kneel and pray.
"Hush, poor ghost, till the red cock crows,
And I a Mass for your soul may say."

Thrice he went to the chamber cold,
Where, stiff and still uncoffinèd,
His brother lay, his beads he told,
And "Rest, poor spirit, rest," he said.

Thrice lay the old priest down to sleep
Before the morning bell should toll;
But still he heard—and woke to weep—
The crying of his brother's soul.

All through the dark, till dawn was pale,
The priest tossed in his misery,
With muffled ears to hide the wail,
The voice of that ghost's agony.

At last the red cock flaps his wings
To trumpet of a day new-born.
The lark, awaking, soaring sings
Into the bosom of the morn.

The priest before the altar stands,
He hears the spirit call for peace;
He beats his breast with shaking hands.
"O Father, grant this soul's release.

“ Most Just and Merciful, set free
From Purgatory’s awful night
This sinner’s soul, to fly to Thee,
And rest for ever in Thy sight.”

The Mass is over—still the clerk
Kneels palid in the morning glow.
He said, “ From evils of the dark
Oh, bless me, father, ere you go.

“ Benediction, that I may rest,
For all night did the banshee weep.”
The priest raised up his hands and blest—
“ Go now, my child, and you will sleep.”

The priest went down the vestry stair,
He laid his vestments in their place,
And turned—a pale ghost met him there,
With beads of pain upon his face.

“ Brother,” he said, “ you have gained me peace,
But why so long did you know my tears,
And say no Mass for my soul’s release,
To save the torture of all those years ? ”

“ God rest you, brother,” the good priest said,
“ No years have passed—but a single night.”
He showed the body uncoffinèd,
And the six wax candles still alight.

The living flowers on the dead man’s breast
Blew out a perfume sweet and strong.
The spirit paused ere he passed to rest—
“ God save your soul from a night so long.”

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